

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 23, 1983

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT CEREMONY HONORING
THE VICTIMS OF THE BEIRUT BOMBING

Andrews Air Force Base

THE PRESIDENT: There can be no sadder duty for one who holds the office I hold than to pay tribute to Americans who have given their lives in the service of their country. I extend also the condolences of ourselves and our people through Ambassador Turk to the families of our loyal Lebanese employees who perished in this tragic event along with their American colleagues.

You here today, the families of these honored dead, I want you to know I speak for all Americans when I say that we share your sorrow and offer you our heartfelt sympathy. We are in your debt and theirs. Your loved ones served their country with talent and energy, courage and commitment. With your sorrow you must feel at the same time a pride -- pride in their dedication. And we, your fellow citizens, share in that, also.

These gallant Americans understood the danger they faced, and yet they went willingly to Beirut. And the dastardly deed, the act of unparalleled cowardice that took their lives, was an attack on all of us -- on our way of life and on the values we hold dear. We would indeed fail them if we let that act deter us from carrying on their mission of brotherhood and peace.

And it is written, "Blessed be the peacemakers." And they truly were peacemakers. They knew the road they traveled was hard and fraught with peril. They walked that road with cool professionalism and a deep sense of purpose. They knew it firsthand how an afflicted mankind looks to us for help -- with faith in our strength, our sense of justice, and our decency. And that is the America that your loved ones exemplified. Let our monument to their memory be a preservation of that America.

Let us here in their presence serve notice to the cowardly, skulking barbarians in the world that they will not have their way. Let us dedicate ourselves to the cause of those loved ones, the cause they served so nobly and for which they sacrificed their lives, a cause of peace on earth and justice for all mankind.

We thank God for them, and God bless you.

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